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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 KUWAIT 001342

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TAGS: PARM PREL KU IR

SUBJECT: KUWAIT STRESSES NEED FOR GCC CONSENSUS IN CONFRONTING IRAN; EXPRESSES INTEREST IN PSI

REF: A. STATE 50792

¶B. KUWAIT 1011

¶C. PARTO 8 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Matthew H. Tueller for reasons 1 .4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: U/S Joseph met April 11 with former GCC Secretary General Bishara; First Deputy PM and Defense and

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Interior Minister Shaykh Jaber Mubarak; and National Security Bureau President Shaykh Sabah Al-Khaled. He also spoke with Deputy PM and FM Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Al-Sabah. Bishara shared with U/S Joseph his views on the individual GCC states and the need for U.S. intervention to reach GCC consensus on confronting Iran and its nuclear ambitions. He argued that once united, the GCC would be a stabilizing force in the region and could help convince Iran to back away from, but not abandon, its nuclear weapons program. With Shaykhs Jaber and Sabah Al-Khaled, U/S Joseph outlined a comprehensive strategy for dealing with Iran and encouraged GOK collaboration on a range of defensive measures, including endorsement of the Proliferation Security Initiative and participation in PSI exercises. All agreed on the need for a consistent and strong message from the international community and recognized that with or without nuclear weapons, Iran was a threat to regional peace and stability. The FM expressed interest in PSI and Post passed to him the evening of April 11 background and suggested language for GOK endorsement. End summary.

Protection under a Nuclear Umbrella

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¶2. (C) During his April 11 visit to Kuwait, part of his Gulf tour to outline a broad strategic approach to counter Iran's nuclear ambitions, Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Joseph met with former GCC Secretary General and GOK Advisor Abdullah

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Bishara. Calling the Iranians "cheaters, manipulators, deceivers, and paranoid," Bishara said the international community should not trust the GOI when it claims its nuclear work is for peaceful purposes only. Explaining that Iran was fearful of its 14 neighbors, of which six have nuclear weapons, (Note: A paranoid Iran counts Russia, China, Pakistan, India, Israel, and the U.S. as its nuclear "neighbors." End note.) Bishara argued that peace was the last item on the GOI agenda and thought the "nuclear umbrella" would protect it.

¶3. (C) In response to U/S Joseph's question about how the U.S. could assist the Gulf states in dealing with Iran,

Bishara encouraged the U.S. to press GCC states to adopt a common, unified position. Commenting that Iran "finds a shelter in the GCC silence," he said it was irresponsible to let Iran act with impunity. He argued that in its 25 year history, the GCC had been successful in maintaining a balance of power in the Gulf. A nuclear Iran would tip that balance, scare away investment, and undermine globalization of the Gulf, the key to stability. He said GCC states needed to recognize the threat, be more practical and less "courteous" (i.e., like the U.S.), and take a stand. He asserted the Gulf was "too precious to be left to the whims of Iran" and said Gulf security was linked to international peace and security. In his view, a less aggressive Iran would help coalition efforts in Iraq, and a stable Iraq would force change in Syria and further liberalize the region.

GCC a Stabilizing Presence

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¶4. (C) Bishara expressed skepticism about Oman's analysis that it was not wise to "needle" Iran; accused Saudi King Abdullah of being "enamored" of Ahmadinejad; complained that Qatar was not sufficiently engaged; said Bahrain, while on board with U.S. views, did not have the respect necessary to advance the issue within the GCC; sought something concrete from the UAE; and criticized his own government for focusing on the environmental impact of an Iranian nuclear accident instead of Kuwait's survival. He urged the U.S. to play a leadership role in developing a "coherent voice on this matter" and recommended the U.S. advocate: GCC unity; GCC support for European diplomatic efforts, IAEA involvement, and global pressure on Iran; and the establishment of a nuclear-free Gulf. He cautioned against bellicose public statements, saying they only goaded the GOI which would use the strong statements to build up support at home and in the region. He also suggested bringing in other neighboring states of Iran, such as Pakistan, India, and Turkey. Bishara said the Iranian regime was "not suicidal" and would back away from, but not abandon its nuclear program, if confronted

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by a unified international community and consistent pressure. He was also critical of the Arab League for trying to please both sides, and said that Hosni Mubarak had "lost his vigor" and that his recent statements about Shiites proved that Egypt did not understand the Gulf.

¶5. (C) Bishara added that former Iranian President Rafsanjani would visit Kuwait on April 16 and said the Iranians were very good at people-to-people diplomacy. The GOI used diplomatic tactics to stall international action and mask its destructive behavior, which included support to Syria, Hezbollah, Hamas, Muqtada Al-Sadr, and Osama bin Laden.

U/S Joseph Outlines a Comprehensive Strategy

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¶6. (C) U/S Joseph opened his meeting with First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior Shaykh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah by briefly reviewing his talks in the UAE, Oman, Bahrain, and Qatar and the Iranian actions -- acceleration of efforts to convert and enrich uranium -- that necessitated increased international pressure and engagement. He emphasized that Iran was acting in defiance of the international community and IAEA board decisions and that, as a non-nuclear weapon state under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, it did not have the right to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons. He said Iranian claims that it needed fuel for the Bushehr reactor were unfounded as Russia had promised fuel for the life of the reactor. The only reason for the significant financial investment was the development of nuclear weapons.

¶7. (C) U/S Joseph said the U.S. continued to pursue a diplomatic solution, but if Iran failed to comply with the

UNSC Presidential Statement to comply with the IAEA board decision, other options, such as Chapter VII actions including sanctions, would have to be considered. With or without nuclear weapons, Iran is a threat and it is necessary to have a comprehensive strategy to deal with it. Elements of a comprehensive strategy could include, among others:

- cooperation on denying Iran the equipment and technology needed to advance its nuclear program;
- cooperation in the Gulf to close down front companies used to build the financial capital needed for nuclear programs;
- GOK endorsement of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) and participation in PSI-related activities;
- shared early warning data pertaining to missile launches;
- enhanced missile defense program;
- coordinated declaratory policies toward such issues as Iranian chemical or biological weapons use, its closure of the Straits of Hormuz, or other contentious actions; and
- joint training and exercises, with a focus on active and passive defense, response to chemical or biological weapons use, and related measures.

He concluded that immediate and continuing action was imperative and stressed the importance of signaling international and GCC resolve to the GOI, using every tool -- diplomatic, military, financial, and others -- available. Together, these reinforce the prospects for diplomatic success and, at the same time, defend U.S. interests.

#### Defense Minister Wants to Know What's Driving Iran

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¶ 18. (C) Shaykh Jaber Mubarak welcomed U/S Joseph's visit, lauded the strong U.S.-Kuwaiti relations, and said the GOK would not delay supporting international action on Iran. Nonetheless, he recommended considering the "Iranian mentality" when developing a strategy. He questioned why the GOI was interested in nuclear production. Iran was one of the biggest oil producers, so fuel was not motivating its behavior. He doubted the presence of regional threats, arguing that most of Iran's neighbors were small, peaceful countries and that any threat to the Iranian regime was internal. He wondered whether Iran was in some sort of competition with North Korea or wanted to revive lost Persian power. He believed it important to understand Iranian logic in pursuing nuclear weapons when the GOI knows it "can never use them."

¶ 19. (C) U/S Joseph shared the Minister's views that Iran could be using nuclear weapons to reestablish its power and status, but said there were strategic motivations as well. Possessing nuclear weapons could provide a sense of invulnerability and enable the GOI to move forward with a more aggressive, expansionist, and destabilizing regional agenda. The perceived threat of GOI detonation of a nuclear

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weapon could hold cities in the Middle East and Europe hostage, allowing the opportunity for the GOI to use aggressive means to pursue its goals, including the use of chemical or biological weapons. Responding to Shaykh Jaber's question, the U/S said Israel shared U.S. concerns.

#### Kuwait Worried about Nuclear Fallout

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¶ 10. (C) Shaykh Jaber further noted GOK concerns about a nuclear accident, saying Kuwait and its neighbors feared another Chernobyl. He agreed with the strategy outlined by the U/S and stressed the importance of international buy-in. He called for adhering to a consistent message making it clear that Iran had no chance for the success of its nuclear programs and recommended that attention be paid to those countries supporting the GOI. Like Bishara, he expressed concern about Mubarak's comments on the prospects for a Sunni-Shiite civil war, convinced that the GOI will

manipulate such statements.

P-5 Needs to Come Together on Iraq

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¶11. (C) U/S Joseph provided the same strategic overview to National Security Bureau (NSB) President Shaykh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah. Shaykh Sabah Al-Khaled shared U.S. concerns about Iran's nuclear aspirations and asked about consensus among the P-5. He added that UNSC consensus would ease the pressure on Qatar and enable the GCC and Arab states to deal more forcefully with Iran. NSB Office Manager Shaykh Thamer Ali Al-Sabah raised the dilemma of permitting Iranian officials to speak freely. Iran continues to argue that it had a right to develop nuclear energy. U/S Joseph noted the challenges reaching agreement among P-5 members on how best to respond to Iranian transgressions, but underscored that the P-5 harbored no illusions as to the nature of Iran's intentions or its developing capabilities. He also said the GOI would use any discord to further divide the UNSC members, and highlighted that the development of fissile material was in violation of the NPT. It is important to work with allies and demonstrate to the GOI through actions and words international determination to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. He cited PSI as a vehicle by which to convey this determination, together with other defensive measures.

GOK to GOI: Only Iran Can Help Iran

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¶12. (C) Shaykh Sabah Al-Khaled told the U/S that the GOK repeatedly stressed to Iran that it needed to work with the international community. This message has twice been passed to Ahmadinejad and four times to Foreign Minister Mottaki. A similar message will be conveyed to Rafsanjani when he visits Kuwait on April 16. Shaykh Sabah Al-Khaled said the GOK had an open dialogue with the GOI and constantly repeated to it that "no one can help Iran but Iran," and encouraged cooperation with the IAEA.

NSB President: Kuwait Must Proceed with Caution

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¶13. (C) Shaykh Sabah Al-Khaled said that Kuwait's position was very sensitive and Kuwait had to exercise caution in handling regional security situations. For example, if Saudi took harsh action against suspected terrorists, Kuwait had to pay close attention in case they crossed the border. The GOK had similar concerns about Iraq and the number of Kuwaiti insurgents there. Syria and Lebanon were also worrisome. Kuwaiti security forces kept close tabs on extremists within Kuwait, but there was little information available about those residing outside of the borders and what harm they could cause if they targeted Kuwait. He further noted GOK concerns about GOI use of chemical or biological weapons. He welcomed a regular dialogue with the U.S. on Iran, pointing to the Secretary's meeting with the FM meeting in Abu Dhabi (ref C) as well as the March 19 visit of Counselor Zelikow (ref B).

FM Requests PSI Endorsement Language

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¶14. (C) U/S Joseph later spoke by phone with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Al-Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah about U.S. concerns about Iran and hopes that the GOK would endorse the PSI and undertake other appropriate defensive measures. The Charge passed ref A background on PSI to the FM later in the evening and on April 12, Post provided his office with draft text for use in GOK

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endorsement of PSI.

¶15. (U) U/S Joseph was accompanied by Charge d'Affaires

a.i. Matthew Tueller; CENTCOM J5 Director Rear Admiral Robert Moeller; NSC Director for Persian Gulf Affairs Nikhil Ramchand; T Senior Advisors Patricia McNerney, Jason Ellis, and Gregory Richard; and PolChief Natalie E. Brown. OMC-K Chief Brigadier General Mark Solo accompanied the delegation to the meeting with Shaykh Jaber Mubarak.

¶16. (U) U/S Joseph's office has cleared this message.

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